PERSONNEL AND READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

President's Military Spouse Commission
Minutes of the Second Meeting

Date & Time:	October 19, 2026, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EST
Location:	Public Virtual Livestream (Washington, D.C.)
Chairwoman:	Jennifer Hegseth
Designated Federal Officer:	Josie Beets

Background and Purpose

The President's Military Spouse Commission held its second meeting on Monday, October 19, 2026, via a public virtual livestream originating from Washington, D.C. The meeting was conducted in alignment with and in furtherance of the Commission's charter, established under Executive Order 14417 and in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), 5 U.S.C. § 1009. The Commission was formed to identify and address systemic quality-of-life barriers affecting military spouses and families, including employment, housing, childcare, healthcare, and education, and to advise the President on actionable administrative solutions and policy reforms to strengthen military readiness. This synopsis captures the narrative highlights, presentations, roundtable discussions, and policy actions of the meeting.

Opening and Welcoming Remarks

Mrs. Josie Beets, the Designated Federal Officer (DFO), opened the meeting at 2:07 p.m. Eastern Time. She confirmed that a quorum of appointed commissioners was present and verified and announced that proceedings were open to the public via video livestream and teleconference line. Mrs. Beets then formally transferred the proceedings to the Commission Chair.

Chairwoman Jennifer Hegseth welcomed the members and expressed gratitude to President Trump for his continued support of military families. She highlighted her recent attendance at the Rose Garden where the President and First Lady signed an executive task force for women's health. She noted that this task force successfully included the Department of War to address healthcare specifically for nearly 400,000 female service members and 4 million spouses and dependents, focusing on medical care deserts, underserved areas, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) access for women to ensure readiness.

Chairwoman Hegseth recapped the accomplishments since the inaugural meeting, noting progress on key issues like spousal employment, childcare, housing, education, and healthcare. She announced that the spouse employment initiative had been overhauled into a unified "SpouseWorks" program, which recently hosted its first in-person career readiness event at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, and has experienced a 70% increase in completed spouse profiles compared to last year. She mentioned an upcoming user-friendly digital upgrade in partnership with America.gov. The Commission is also working on reducing the administrative burden of school transfers during permanent change of station (PCS) moves and has launched a toll-reduction pilot program in Florida for active-duty families near MacDill Air Force Base.

Executive Director's Report and Commission Introductions

Executive Director Desiree Sayle welcomed the Commission members back to the White House and welcomed Mrs. Shelby Telle, spouse of the Acting Director of the United States Army, as the newest member of the Commission. Mrs. Sayle commended the commissioners for their exhaustive travels and direct outreach to military spouses globally over the last month, identifying local concerns and discovering best practices within their respective military branches. She thanked Chairwoman Hegseth and her staff for their dedication, stating that the President's Commission is uniquely positioned to address the needs of 21st-century military spouses.

Mrs. Sayle announced that Mrs. Cindy Wilsbach and Dr. Doniel Wolfe were participating via the live listening line from Misawa Air Base in Japan, where they were conducting spouse calls and facilities tours across five bases in Japan and South Korea. Mrs. Sayle then introduced Spencer O'Reilly to guide the Commission through the service-branch best practices and slide presentations.

Spousal Employment Solutions

Spencer O'Reilly introduced the spousal employment segment, emphasizing the Commission's goal to support robust career progression rather than temporary job placement. He presented the Air Force and Space Force's "Global Military Spouse Connection" pilot program, which matches spouses with hiring managers before receiving PCS orders. This pre-PCS matching pipeline has led to a 60% increase in spousal placements over the past three weeks and is expanding to more continental U.S. and OCONUS installations.

Mr. O'Reilly also presented the Army's "Voluntary Reassignment Program" (DAVRAP) launched in May 2025. This portal allows civilian Army employees who are military spouses to secure non-competitive internal reassignments during a PCS, reducing hiring times. To date, over 11,000 candidates have created profiles, and over 12,000 hiring managers are participating globally.

The Commission members discussed the spousal employment initiatives:

- Mrs. LyndaLee Lunday emphasized the need to expand these career-retention programs to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to support Coast Guard spouses moving between Coast Guard bases.
- Mrs. Deborah Schiess shared that the Department of the Air Force and Space Force are developing a similar career-progression program. She suggested that the Commission talk with them to get an update.
- Mrs. Trish Smith noted that the SpouseWorks Scholarship has been successfully expanded to cover all ranks, including Coast Guard families.
- Mrs. Angela Perryman stressed the importance of tracking concrete metrics and data on how many spouses are actually hired through employer partnerships, rather than merely counting the number of participating employer partners.

Deployment-Related Support

The Commission reviewed deployment-related support challenges, particularly the issue of outdated or optional emergency contact rosters. Mr. O'Reilly presented the Air Force and Space Force's "Commander's Key Support Program" as a best practice. This program utilizes the Personnel Accountability and Assessment System (PAAS) to grant Key Support Liaisons (KSLs) or command-appointed volunteers limited, secure access to contact rosters for emergency updates, deployment notifications, and evacuation communications, rather than social activities.

The Commission members discussed the deployment support systems:

- Mrs. Deborah Schiess stated that she wanted to emphasize that this is a brand new program.
- Mrs. Angela Perryman praised the development, noting that the Navy's equivalent system is NFAAS. She requested that Navy Ombudsmen receive similar limited roster access, citing the vital importance of rapid communication during previous emergency evacuations in Bahrain.
- Mrs. Shannon Nordhaus emphasized that KSLs work with the First Shirts in the units.
- Mrs. LyndaLee Lunday announced that the Coast Guard has officially made the Ombudsman program a formal part of command policy, granting them official command access. She explained that they utilize senior enlisted service members to assist with messaging, allowing spouses to opt-in for emergency-only rosters while respecting privacy.

Childcare Initiatives

Mr. O'Reilly introduced childcare initiatives, noting the Department of War is working to extended Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) fee assistance to faith-based providers. Mrs. Hegseth mentioned that there could be an opportunity for other licensed exempt providers to apply for this fee assistance.

The Commission members raised local childcare challenges and service-specific best practices:

- Mrs. Katrina Isom highlighted the difficulties families face when trying to place multiple children in the same Child Development Center (CDC).
- Mrs. Sayle mentioned the importance of paying people appropriately for childcare and highlighted the connection between pay and childcare accessibility.
- Mrs. Andrea Ruiz pointed out local hourly pay disparities for entry-level childcare workers and noted that fast-food industries in California offer higher entry-level wages than base CDCs. She proposed expanding the PCS childcare pilot program (providing a $500 bonus) to cover long-term deployments and temporary duty (TDY) travel, sharing her personal challenges as a single parent on extended training assignments.
- Mrs. Angela Perryman shared that it is important to increase awareness that childcare providers are offered a 100% discount for their first child, discounts for subsequent children, and tuition assistance to encourage childhood development careers.
- Mrs. Sayle noted the opportunity to socialize information about childcare provider opportunities as the Commission members travel and engage with military families.
- Mrs. Ruiz discussed a pilot program that will expire in 2027 to help military families offset the cost of childcare during CONUS PCS moves. She suggested expanding the idea to help single service members during deployment and TAD assignments.
- Mrs. Hegseth stated that Mrs. Ruiz's suggestion was something the Commission could consider.
- Mrs. Sayle noted the importance of having a support system and how military moves disrupt that support system.
- Mrs. Hegseth identified the opportunity of making childcare certifications universal across the services to alleviate some of the challenges the Commission is hearing.
- Mrs. Karen Raines mentioned "M-Day" soldiers, noting that existing childcare assistance programs often exclude part-time drilling soldiers who need childcare coverage during scheduled drill weekends. She also mentioned duty status reform.
- Mr. O'Reilly mentioned that the Commission is working with the Domestic Policy Council on the issues that Ms. Raines brought up.
- Mrs. Catherine Bentivegna discussed that when there is a government shutdown childcare providers do not get paid but have to go to work.
- Mrs. Kimberly Weimer discussed implementing locality pay for CDC workers in high-cost areas to improve retention. She noted that in J-BER, Alaska, hiring is delayed by background checks and medical physical requirements. She shared that base-authorized nonprofits can hire childcare workers in weeks, whereas the official Civilian Human Resources Agency (CHRA) process takes several months, prompting spouses to find employment off-base.

Policy Updates and Closing

Mr. O'Reilly and the Commission reviewed final policy developments:

- Mature Minor Policy (MHS Genesis): To resolve digital healthcare access barriers for parents of minor children (ages 13–17), the Defense Health Agency (DHA) is updating the MHS Genesis system to include an opt-in portal where children can authorize parental access to their electronic medical records. This change is scheduled for implementation by the end of November 2026.
- Toll-Relief Pilot Program: Active-duty service members and spouses commuting to MacDill Air Force Base in Florida are currently receiving a 50% toll discount, saving families approximately $1,500 annually. The Commission is actively working with the State of Florida and toll operators to increase the discount to 100% and use this program as a nationwide template. Mrs. Hegseth mentioned that the Commission would like for the Florida model to be a pilot.
- Mrs. Sayle reminded families that they can contact the Commission by mail at the White House address (1600 Pennsylvania Avenue) or via the online portal.

Adjournment

Designated Federal Officer Josie Beets confirmed that the second meeting of the President's Military Spouse Commission was conducted in full compliance with Executive Order 14417 and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). With no further business introduced, the meeting was formally adjourned at 2:50 p.m. Eastern Time.

Certification of Minutes

As required by the Federal Advisory Committee Act, the President's Military Spouse Commission Chairwoman Jennifer Hegseth certifies these minutes by her signature below.

Jennifer Hegseth
Chairwoman, President's Military Spouse Commission

Oct 23, 2026
Date